



University of
Nottingham
Institute for Policy and Engagement

Institute for Policy and Engagement

Annual Report 2023–24

This is the place that
is shaping the future



Director's foreword

by Stephen Meek

I am delighted to present the latest annual report from the Institute for Policy and Engagement at the University of Nottingham. In this report we will look back over some highlights of what has been a busy and successful year, and look forward to what is to come in 2024/25.

Supporting impact

The Institute for Policy and Engagement was established in 2018 to be a centre of expertise in engaging policymakers and public with research. This might be in shaping research questions, collaborating in the research process or learning from and using research findings to shape the future.

We work collaboratively across every faculty in the University, providing support ranging from training (online, face to face and competitive entry development programmes); consultancy and advice on funding bids and engagement activity; funding programmes; and access to networks and opportunities to engage locally, nationally and globally.

We celebrate success and build the University's reputation through our annual awards and through blogs, podcasts and social media activity, showcasing the difference made by Nottingham's research.

Recognising success

The latest Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) published by Research England in September showed the University performing above its peers on 'Public and Community Engagement' and 'Working with the Public and Third Sector'. We played an important part in securing this success.

I was particularly proud, too, that the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement awarded the University a Silver Watermark this year in recognition of our commitment to public and civic engagement. The award was for activity across the University, but the Institute has played an important catalytic and convening role, and led the considerable work to pull together our application, assessment and action plan.

I am also very excited about the forthcoming publication of our Policy Commission, chaired by Lord Watson (former Labour Party Deputy Leader) and with the university's Professor Lucelia Rodrigues as Deputy Chair. It examines issues around a just transition to net zero and draws on testimony from policymakers, businesses, campaigners and experts from the University. The report will offer a set of evidence based and actionable recommendations for Government, and will launch in the House of Lords later this year.

Embedding collaboration

Almost everything we do as an Institute is a collaboration with others across the University or beyond. This will only grow more important as tightening environments for UK universities place a premium on being more than the sum of our parts, and as the next round of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) starts to focus minds.

The year has seen strengthened engagement with colleagues in research administration, in communications and advocacy, and across faculties.

We also worked closely with colleagues in Nottingham Trent University, our local Councils and the new East Midlands County Combined Authority, City as Lab and the Col(!)aboratory as well as many community organisations to mobilise research for policy and to empower communities and the public.

Sectorally we take an active role too. We are one of five universities in the Collaborations in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) partnership, funded by Research England. CAPE comes to end in December 2024 and will leave a game changing legacy of material and insight to show what works in bringing academics and policymakers together.

Celebrating teamwork

And finally, I would like to thank every member of the Institute team for their exceptional hard work, creativity and enthusiasm over the year, and making the Institute such a great place to work.



Key facts and figures

The Institute connects Nottingham's world-leading researchers with the public and policymakers to share insight and solve problems. Through these partnerships we tackle together the most compelling challenges locally, nationally and globally.

Over the last year, our team worked with academic experts from across the university who want to create real impact by providing training, advice and expertise.

Key stats between Sep 2023–Aug 2024



Supported over

140

academics to reach policy and public audiences



Trained over

500

colleagues online and face to face



Collaborated with nearly

150

external partners, ranging from community groups here in Nottingham to international organisations operating across the globe



Engaged over

29,000

people through our public events programme



Worked with

102

academics to secure funding for research projects and to help build partnerships for impact



Generated over

400,000

engagements through our podcast, blogs and social media to share Nottingham's world-changing research

Partnering with communities

Welcoming the public to campus

Young adults investigated the history of University Park to create a sound trail, encouraging all to learn a little about the heritage of the campus.

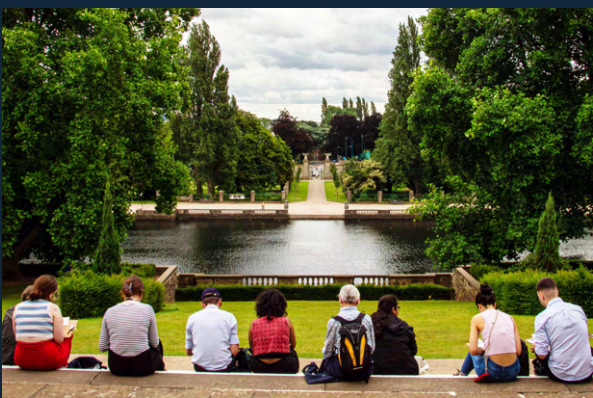
Our Science Public lecture series welcomed almost 900 attendees in the last year, while our Bright Sparks events at Lakeside invited children and their families to learn about the world of spiders and space.

We staged a special panel discussion to examine Byron's poetry from new angles for the bicentenary celebrations. This complimented our work with Newstead Abbey, where we funded additional interpretation in the grounds and online content on research of a Knowledge Exchange Fellow.



Loved the variety and how well the staff spoke to the children. Everyone was polite and smiling and loved their subject."

Feedback from Science in the Park 2024



Giving young people a voice

In May we hosted a Youth Voice workshop to support Nottingham's UNICEF Child Friendly City bid. This event welcomed the city council programme team to hear case studies from our Youth Trends project (in collaboration with Nonsuch) and Tara Webster-Deakin's work with the YMCA. The final report from the Youth Trends project will launch later this year as we begin to map out next steps of academic support and how City as Lab's data connector can bring multiple data sources together under this umbrella.



Taking research out to the public

This year saw a record number of UoN academics involved in the Festival of Science and Curiosity (FOSAC), helping the event reach its largest ever audience of over 15,000 people.

Science in the Park was also a huge success once again. This event is a celebration of STEM at Wollaton Hall and sold out in just four days!



Supporting the region's leaders

With our partners at Nottingham Trent University we have established an Expert Advisory Panel, where we convene our experts to help local policymakers solve pressing challenges.

We have also worked closely with the NTU/UoN Col(l)aboratory, helping steer the programme and identify projects that meet local needs.



Fostering innovation and leadership

Achieving national accreditation through the Watermark Award

In December the university was awarded a silver Watermark by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement. This prestigious award recognises our commitment to deliver high quality public engagement and support staff to share their research and inspire others. The award followed a year-long assessment, requiring input from across the university, and is one of only four awarded this year.

Professor Jane Norman, Nottingham's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, praised the achievement as acknowledgment that "public engagement is at the core of our mission as a civic university and our vision as a university without borders."



The [Watermark] review uncovered exemplary PE practice, and high levels of commitment from staff. The University has made significant investments in the Institute for Policy and Engagement and the Castle Meadows campus and there is widespread support for its civic mission, which has modelled what is possible for engagement. This work is building strong foundations for the future."

Watermark Report, NCCPE

Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE)

2024 sees the successful conclusion of the Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) programme. This ground-breaking five-year collaboration between Nottingham, Cambridge, Northumbria, Manchester and UCL explored how to effectively support academic engagement with policy.

CAPE produced a wealth of resources and insights to maximise the potential of academic and policy partnerships. We are proud to have played a vital role in this project and are looking forward to developing this work further in the future.



I have no doubt that the perspective I've gained [...] has given me renewed passion, clarity, and confidence to take forward into the next phase of my career."

Laura Koch, CAPE Policy Fellow



Partnership Lab

In November 2023 we hosted our first Partnership Lab, alongside ChalleNGe and Stemcity. We welcomed 70 delegates onto campus to explore four key areas for collaboration; City as Lab, Stemcity, ChalleNGe and Child Friendly Nottingham. Attendees came from a diverse range of organisations and feedback was incredibly positive.



Decolonising impact

Our ongoing sector-leading work on decolonising impact, which began with our conference on Engaging with Policy in the Global South in 2022, gained further traction. Among other developments, in September several of our team spoke at the University of Warwick's International Research Culture Conference, and in July we published an article in the Research Culture special edition of the interdisciplinary journal *Exchanges*.

Focusing on sustainability

Just Transition Policy Commission

This year we successfully launched our Policy Commission on the Just Transition to Net Zero. Chaired by Lord Watson with Lucelia Rodrigues as deputy chair, this foundational project brings Nottingham academics together with leading experts from across the UK to understand how government can ensure the transition to Net Zero happens in a fair and equitable way. The Commission provides a high-profile platform for a diverse line-up of academics working in schools across the university to show the importance of their research.

Jane Norman shared some initial findings at the Labour Party Conference this September and the final report will be launched later in the autumn.



The collaboration enabled a much deeper analysis of the findings that I would not have had the skills or time to undertake. This provided a very strong platform for further discussions."

Rachel Quinn, Head of Developmental Assets, YMCA



Green Hustle Festival and community projects

Green Hustle is a free public festival held in Nottingham's Market Square. Founded to help an urban community connect with nature and support sustainability, the festival prides itself on inclusivity. The event was a joyous mix of art, nature, music, creativity and awareness raising. Our sponsorship helps this event remain free for the 10,000 people who benefitted and aligns with our civic mission.



Transforming energy capabilities with HyDEX

The Institute led a programme of policy engagement work for HyDEX, a collaboration of eight Midlands universities working to promote the hydrogen economy in the region. We organised a series of intensive workshops with regional local authorities as well as the production of a local decision makers' hydrogen toolkit, helping local leaders understand and plan for this crucial emerging energy technology and develop the hydrogen economy.



Maximising the impact of Nottingham's latest research

Throughout the year we have foregrounded the world-leading research from our academics across our channels. We identified key projects for the COP campaign, supported 2024 Sustainability Week with our own parallel campaign on the latest research, and worked alongside research communications to identify projects and create content for the 100 Ways to Change the World campaign.

We also continue to connect policy makers with environmental research through our SHAPing Sustainable Futures Hub, which is used by people and organisations including government departments, local authorities, and the Environment Agency.



Building capacity

Institute Academy Programmes

The Institute Academy Programmes are our flagship training programme. They provide the opportunity for academics to extend the reach of their research to the public and policy makers through dedicated one-to-one support, bespoke training courses, and a small project fund to put their learning into practice.

Projects by the 2023-24 cohort include: organising a successful conference in Sri Lanka on education policies; mitigating the impact of trace metal pollutants on communities in Wales; and co-creating narratives with refugee families through community cooking. We were also proud to see several projects from previous years being extended through further funding as academics build on the skills gained through our training.

Further training opportunities

Alongside our bespoke training, our Moodle courses provide an instant-access resource for professional development, with usage doubling in the last year. We also provide talks and masterclasses to give staff the practical skills needed to deliver impact. Training included a focus on creating hands on experiences for family learning and considering EDI implications and nurture equitable partnerships.

The Institute [...] played a valuable role in not only providing an opportunity to produce knowledge together, fusing lived experiences with professional experiences, but also provided vital connections and support to extend our ongoing public engagement work into the policy space."

Larissa Sandy, Associate Professor in Criminology



I have found the Civic Training Programme a highly informative and productive programme. [...] I have developed a greater appreciation for the complexities associated with policy and engagement in this space. It has also been an effective way to meet colleagues and explore ways of working, especially in a cross-faculty context."

Mark Rawlinson, Faculty Lead for Public Engagement and Civic (Arts)



Forming networks

Among other talks and facilitated events, October saw us host Professor Anand Menon, Director of the UK in a Changing Europe thinktank, for an informative (and highly entertaining) public lecture on British politics after Brexit, chaired by our Director. The event was a partnership with the School of Politics and International Relations,

In February we hosted our Stagnation Nation event in partnership with the Resolution Foundation to debate the national and regional productivity challenge. Panellists included the CEO of Nottingham City Council and the Chair of the East Midlands Freeport.

Facilitating impact

In the last year we distributed over £900k of funding to projects involving the public and policy partners. With our support, this funding enabled research to make a real difference in the world, from advising the government on tackling modern slavery, to launching a national Charter for Inclusive Entrepreneurship, to supporting stakeholder-led dialogue on peacebuilding in Liberia and the welfare of garment workers in Cambodia. We also provided advice and expertise to academics applying for external research funding and impact opportunities. Many of the projects we funded are shortlisted REF case studies, demonstrating the ongoing value of the projects we support.

Recognising excellence

Our annual awards continue to provide a valued platform to recognise the outstanding work by our researchers in achieving policy impact and engaging the public with current research. They also provide an opportunity to identify research and staff that might benefit from our support.

Shortlisted projects were celebrated via our online campaign which shared the impact of Nottingham's world-leading research with over 150,000 people.



Looking forward to 2024-25

The last year has been a busy and exciting period for the Institute, introducing a number of new challenges and key milestones. As we look ahead to next year, however, it's clear that even better things are still to come!

Coming up in 2024/25...

Our policy commission findings are due to launch shortly in the House of Lords. Delivering our Watermark action plan is also a priority, reinforcing a culture where public engagement is core to our activity.

We are currently collaborating on the 'Forest' exhibition with Nottingham Castle. This project unites academics from all five faculties with local artists and Nottingham City Council to showcase art and science coming together to interpret nature.

We will also be working with colleagues at University of Derby and Nottingham Trent University to support the new East Midlands County Combined Authority, ensuring that the Mayor and her team are able to draw on the latest research and insights.

Thank you to everyone who has worked with us over the last year to ensure that Nottingham's research successfully reaches beyond the confines of the university grounds to deliver real impact. We look forward to another year of successful partnerships, collaboration, and research!

To find out more about any of the work mentioned in this report or to keep up to date with what we do, please visit our website at nott.ac/ipe.

Alongside these key milestones we will also continue to run our successful annual events and workshops, including FOSAC which will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2025.

We are also adding several new events to our programme, the first of which is Future Makers this October. This fun, family-friendly event features interactive exhibits, hands-on activities, and themed crafts, exploring the latest innovations and research at Nottingham.

We will also continue to expand our training offer to ensure that researchers have the expertise they need to deliver meaningful impact and develop our impact leaders network to facilitate staff support and inter-disciplinary research.

